

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY  
**JAMES C. BACKSTROM**  
COUNTY ATTORNEY



Dakota County Judicial Center  
1560 Highway 55  
Hastings, Minnesota 55033-2392  
Phillip D. Prokopowicz, Chief Deputy  
Karen A. Schaffer, First Assistant  
Monica Jensen, Community Relations Director

Telephone  
(651) 438-4438  
FAX: (651) 438-4479 (Civil Division)  
FAX: (651) 438-4500 (Criminal Division)  
FAX: (651) 438-4499 (Juvenile/Admin Division)  
E-mail: attorney@co.dakota.mn.us

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**TWO MINNEAPOLIS POLICE OFFICERS CHARGED WITH CRIMES**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom announced that two Minneapolis police officers have been charged\* in connection with an incident that occurred in Minneapolis on May 28, 2008. (Backstrom said that his office is handling these matters on a conflict basis and all court proceedings will be held in Hennepin County District Court.) Scott Donald Mars, age 34 and William David Thornbury age 28, were both charged with one count each of Intentional Discharge of a Firearm and Reckless Discharge of a Firearm in a Municipality (both felonies) and Carrying a Pistol While Under the Influence (a misdemeanor) in connection with the incident that occurred while they were off duty. Mars was also charged with two counts of Fourth Degree Driving While Impaired (a misdemeanor).

On May 28, 2008, at approximately 11:55 p.m., Minneapolis police officers were dispatched to a neighborhood after receiving a 911 call from a concerned citizen related to gunshots being fired. According to the concerned citizen who lives in the neighborhood, earlier in the evening there had been a loud party at another residence in the neighborhood. The concerned citizen approached some individuals who had been standing outside the residence where the party was at and told them that the party was getting too loud and advised them that he was going to call the police. The individuals apologized to him and returned to the residence. After returning to his residence and standing in his yard, a black SUV pulled up in front of his house. One of the occupants of the SUV yelled a profanity out the window. The concerned citizen then heard gunshots come from the SUV, which then left the area at a high rate of speed. As the SUV sped off the concerned citizen heard several more gunshots coming from the direction of the SUV. As part of the their investigation, police officers interviewed other individuals who lived in the neighborhood. Several of the neighbors also reported hearing the gunshots earlier in the evening. Investigating officers were able to recover two .9 mm discharged cartridge casings and three .45 caliber discharged cartridge casings at the scene.

At approximately 12:35 a.m. on May 29th, officers observed a black Chevrolet Tahoe being driven in the neighborhood and park near the scene. The driver of the Tahoe was identified as Scott Mars and the passenger in the vehicle was identified as William Thornbury. Both individuals are Minneapolis police officers. Officers approached Mars and Thornbury and asked if they had been at a party earlier in the evening. When asked what had happened, Mars admitted that he had discharged a handgun out the sunroof of the Tahoe. In speaking with both Mars and Thornbury, officers could detect an odor of alcohol. Subsequent analysis indicated that Mars had a blood alcohol concentration of .19 and that Thornbury had a blood alcohol concentration of .074.

From the interior of the Tahoe, officers recovered a .9 mm handgun that was registered to Mars and a .45 Caliber handgun that was registered to Thornbury. Officers also recovered nine .9 mm discharged cartridge casings from the interior of the vehicle. The Minneapolis Police Department Weapons Identification Unit test fired both firearms found in the Tahoe for comparison purposes. The analysis indicated that the discharged cartridge cases found at the scene had matching characteristics to the cartridges fired from the weapons found inside the Tahoe.

Backstrom commented: "This type of conduct is inappropriate and cannot be tolerated under any circumstance. Firing weapons in such a reckless way while under the influence of alcohol in a residential area could easily have tragic consequences." Both Mars and Thornbury were charged by summons and complaint and are expected to have their first court appearance in the next 30-45 days. If you have questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4438.

\*Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant/suspect is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.